



## U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL WASHINGTON

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### Left in the Cold: Spokane County Impact Analysis of Possible Home Heating Program Cuts

***More than 40,000 Washingtonians – and 4,000 Spokane Co. Residents --  
Could Lose Home Heating Support Under House Plan***

With the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives finalizing spending bills for next year, stark differences remain over many programs that Americans depend on. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is an indispensable lifeline for struggling families, particularly during these tough economic times.

However, under a new allocation formula proposed by the House, Washington State would face a roughly 40 percent cut in LIHEAP funds relative to the Senate's proposal, a devastating result, especially during cold winters.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a budget bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education on September 22, 2011 (S. 1599), which includes proposed funding for LIHEAP.

The House counterpart (H.R. 3070) was introduced on September 29, 2011, and is currently awaiting consideration in the House Appropriations Committee. Both the House and Senate are expected to consider the appropriations for LIHEAP before the end of the year. While the proposed funding levels of the House and Senate are similar, the formula for allocating to the states is different and will be a major issue to be negotiated with regard to LIHEAP.

### **Washington State:**

- More than 100,000 low-income households in Washington State received LIHEAP support last year.
- A change in the state allocation formula contained in the House plan means Washington State would get about **40 percent less**, a deficit of about \$30 million, less than under the Senate plan. By comparison, the Senate plan proposes roughly \$69 million in funding for Washington State.
- Meanwhile, states like Florida, Arizona and Texas would see increases in funding under the House proposal.
- The Senate plan would provide critical home energy assistance for roughly **41,000 additional low-income households** in Washington State relative to the U.S. House of Representatives budget plan.<sup>1</sup>

### **Spokane County:**

- 11,343 households received LIHEAP assistance in Spokane last year. Even if the demand for LIHEAP were to remain constant for this year, the House plan would represent cutting 35 percent of the households who needed the assistance last year.
- The House plan would provide **\$2.5 million** less<sup>2</sup> LIHEAP funding for Spokane County than the Senate plan.
- The House plan would result in about **4,000 fewer households**<sup>3</sup> receiving LIHEAP assistance this fiscal year.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Washington State Department of Commerce

<sup>2</sup> Source: Washington State Department of Commerce

<sup>3</sup> Source: Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP)